
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20426



NEWS RELEASE

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June 22, 1999

FERC TO OPEN NEW OFFICE

Chairman James J. Hoecker announced today that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission will open a new office--the Office of Energy Projects--that will have the engineering and environmental expertise to certificate new gas pipeline projects and to authorize and monitor hydroelectric projects.

A director will be named at a later date.

The new office, which will open as part of the implementation of FERC First, will include the functions formerly conducted by the Office of Hydropower Licensing and most certificate operations of the Office of Pipeline Regulation. The Office of Markets, Tariffs and Rates (OMTR) will be responsible for those aspects of pipeline certification that relate directly to markets, tariffs and rates.

Chairman Hoecker said, "Energy Projects and Markets, Tariffs and Rates effectively represent two major and distinct areas of the Commission's technical expertise and statutory responsibility. Energy Projects will focus on another set of key Commission goals--project siting and development, balancing environmental and other concerns and safeguarding the public. OMTR will focus on promoting competitive energy markets and protecting customers from abuses of market power. The new offices will be approximately equal in size and this will accord projects work the attention and importance within the Commission that it deserves. Of course, under our new business approach, the coordination between the offices--in other words, between our economic and non-economic regulatory efforts--will be keener than ever. This new office presents new organizational challenges, to be sure, but it will be good for our technical staff and our record of customer service."

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The hydropower licensing and the pipeline certificate processes have much in common, including the need for detailed environmental evaluations and the fact that they deal with long-term projects that can be in effect for decades. FERC First has demonstrated that assignments are carried out faster and more efficiently by combining parts of offices that do similar work, bringing together employees engaged in the same processes, and eliminating repetitive decision-making steps. Inter-office teams will integrate the consideration of environmental and economic aspects of pipeline construction certificates.

This is the sixth--and final--new office to be opened under FERC First, a major reengineering undertaking that is changing the way the Commission goes about its business.

In February of this year, the Commission announced the opening of the Office of Administrative Litigation and the Dispute Resolution Service. In July of last year, it announced the opening of the Office of Strategy and Organizational Management and the Office of Finance, Accounting and Operations. A director was named to head OMTR in May of this year.

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